

referendum, beginning with an initial drawdown.

This is not a requirement I propose lightly. As many in this Chamber and in my home State know, I have been an outspoken critic of the Bush administration's policies in Iraq, and I voted against giving the President authority to invade Iraq, regarding it as an abdication of congressional responsibility.

I have supported funding for troops in the field and for Iraqi reconstruction, while calling for an exit strategy, including benchmarks to which the administration should be held accountable, and major policy changes that would increase the probability of achieving at least some of our goals.

But there is no evidence that President Bush has heeded anyone who does not accept his glib assurances and his stay-the-course rhetoric. As a result, the mistakes that have marred this effort from the beginning, poor or non-existent planning, for example, and weak international participation, have been compounded.

Such failures must not become a rationale for extending our occupation of Iraq. In fact, our presence itself is a target of the insurgents and a magnet for international terrorists. And it may be encouraging some elements of the Iraqi leadership to defer essential decisions and compromises that are necessary if their country is to assume responsibility for its own future.

So we must leave. How we leave does matter: in a way that spares the lives of American troops and Iraqi non-combatants, in a way that minimizes the chance that Iraq will descend into massacres, ethnic cleansing or civil war, and in a way that maximizes the chances for Iraqi self-defense and self-government.

But we must end the occupation, and the approval of the Constitution offers us an opportunity to begin that process. It is an opportunity we must seize. There are no guarantees in this enterprise. Iraq could rise to this challenge with the Kurds and the Shia more fully accommodating the essential interests of Sunnis in changes to the Constitution early next year, based on input from a newly elected Sunni Parliament after December, or Iraq could further descend into sectarian violence.

Our country cannot absolve ourselves of responsibility for creating this quagmire, or for helping avoid the worst-case possibilities going forward, but we must understand, and the President must tell the world we understand, that a sustained American military presence is not part of the solution. It is not feasible. In some ways it exacerbates the difficulties, and it must be ended.

Our resolution draws in concept and content on one introduced in the Senate by Mr. FEINGOLD on June 14. It updates that resolution by taking explicit account of the constitutional referendum and proposing an initial immediate drawdown of troops.

Mr. Speaker, we should never have started this war. We should have and

could have utilized other means of containing and controlling whatever threat Saddam Hussein represented. No ideal option is available to us now in ending it, but the October 15 vote offers the best opportunity we are likely to have to begin the process of withdrawal credibly, and hopefully to turn the responsibility for Iraq's future over to the Iraqis themselves, and to repair the diplomacy and foreign policy from which the invasion of Iraq has been such a tragic departure for our country.

PRICE-MILLER RESOLUTION ON IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MILLER of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I also rise in support of the Price-Miller resolution.

Mr. Speaker, millions of Americans feel increasing frustration with the contrived reasons given for invading Iraq, with the lack of any realistic plan for the aftermath of our invasion, and with the administration's failure to state clearly what has to happen for our military to come home.

And I feel the same frustration. This administration has said simply that we should stay the course, but has failed to declare our port of destination. It is hard to believe that there is a course, that we are not simply drifting rudderless.

Mr. Speaker, it has become painfully clear that most Iraqis now see our military, who has served admirably, as an occupying army. Iraqis believe the United States intends to occupy Iraq on a long-term basis, and they believe that our government intends to dominate the elected Iraqi Government, rather than respect that government as the legitimate government of a fully sovereign nation with control of its own natural resources, security and public safety.

Iraqi suspicions about our intentions undermine the legitimacy of the Iraqi Government and fuel the insurgency that continues unabated. Mr. Speaker, if our presence in Iraq is truly not for Iraq's oil or for a permanent staging area for our military operations in that part of the world, we need to say so. We need to state clearly that we do not intend a long-term occupation of Iraq, and the Iraqis will determine their own future. We need to say out loud that we will transfer to Iraq security forces the bases now used by our military, and that we will maintain no permanent bases or long-term military presence in Iraq.

The Price-Miller resolution calls for more than the platitudes that we stay the course or finish the job. We demand that the President state clearly the remaining mission of our military in Iraq, and to state the time period that the President believes will be required to accomplish that mission, what needs

to happen for our men and women to come home, and when does the Bush administration think that it will happen.

Mr. Speaker, there is no better way to persuade the Iraqi people that we really intend to withdraw than to begin withdrawing. The Price-Miller resolution calls for a partial withdrawal as soon as possible. There is still work to be done to help the new Iraqi Government achieve stability and an enduring democracy, and we need to give new urgency to those efforts. We need to train Iraq security forces and engage other nations in that effort. We need to help reconstruction efforts and provide diplomatic support to the new government. But the referendum approving the new Constitution gives us an opportunity, an opportunity we must seize, to change fundamentally what we are fighting for, and what the Iraqi insurgents are fighting against.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot do that unless we say credibly out loud that our military is not there to stay.

THE REPUBLICAN BUDGET IS BAD FOR LATINOS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. SOLIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in opposition to the proposed Republican budget cuts and the impact it will have on the Latino community. There are nearly 40 million Latinos in the United States, and more than 19 million are in the labor force making contributions to our Nation's prosperity and economic growth. These families have strengthened the fabric of our society through their commitment to family and community.

The Republican budget, in my opinion, ignores the challenges that American families are facing, particularly Latino families. Republicans have proposed cuts to essential programs to our Nation's Latino families in order to pay for the \$106 billion tax break for the wealthy few. These tax cuts are reckless, in my opinion, and unfair to the middle- and lower-income families, and reflect this Republican-led Congress's double standard.

The Republican proposal includes a cut of more than \$10 billion of Medicaid over the next 5 years. Today, as you know, Medicaid is the largest health insurance program in our country, and Medicaid is a very important program for the Latino families in America. It currently provides health insurance to about 58 million people, including 28 million who are children. Medicaid helps 41 percent of people who live in poverty, many of whom work full time and still do not earn enough to rise out of poverty.

Over 10 million Medicaid recipients are Latinos, and Medicaid covers more than one in three Latino children. Latinos have the highest uninsured rate in America. One out of every three